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WASHINGTON — On Dec. 12, 1980, the day after he was designated by President-elect Reagan to be the next Attorney General of the United States, William French Smith went to the 65th birthday party of a man that Newsweek magazine reports is the subject of a Federal grand jury investigation in New York.

The future head of our Justice Department joined 200 other guests to honor Frank Sinatra, whose lifelong gangland friendships have become part of his own legend. Sinatra took a trip to Cuba in 1947 to see Lucky Luciano; he was seen often in the 60's with "Joe Fish," Al Capone's cousin; he extended hospitality to Momo Salvatore "Sam" Giancana, head of the Chicago mob, that caused the Nevada gambling authorities to revoke his license to own a piece of a Las Vegas hotel-casino.

It was bad enough that Ronald Reagan turned to Mr. Sinatra for fund-raising help during the campaign; bad enough that he attended a Sinatra anniversary party last summer, bad enough that he selected Sinatra to organize entertainment for the inaugural gala on Jan. 19.

But the involvement of the designee for Attorney General in the rehabilitation of the reputation of a man obviously proud to be close to notorious hoodlums is the first deliberate affront to propriety of the Reagan Administration.

The Attorney General is responsible for the enforcement of Federal law. In the records of the Department of Jus-

tice, which Mr. Smith will head, is file after file on Mr. Sinatra's liaison with mobsters, along with a vivid account of the first time the singer tried to curry favor with a President-elect.

That episode, lest we forget in the euphoria of inaugural galas, began with Sinatra's introduction of President-elect Kennedy to Judith Campbell Exner. After that relationship was firmly established, testified Mrs. Exner, Sinatra introduced her to Sam Giancana, and an unprecedented dual affair was conducted with a President and a mob leader.

When F.B.I. wiretaps showed a Mafia moll to be talking to the President several times a week, J. Edgar Hoover went to the Oval Office and put a stop to the affair: Attorney General Robert Kennedy must have seen the Sinatra file; he cancelled the plans for the President to stay at a Palm Springs guest house Sinatra had remodeled for him. Instead President Kennedy stayed with Bing Crosby. The insulted Mr. Sinatra, who cultivated Spiro Agnew in the 70's, had to wait until the 80's to again demonstrate close White House ties.

In the meantime, Mr. Giancana and his associate Johnny Roselli were retained by the C.I.A. to assassinate Castro. Soon after that plot fizzled, lawmen spotted Giancana at the Cal-Neva Lodge in Nevada as Sinatra's guest, and revoked the singer's license. (According to New York Times reporter Robert Lindsey, Mafia informer "Jimmy the Weasel" Fratianno is expected to assert in a forthcoming book that Sinatra was Giancana's "front" in that investment.) When the Senate began to learn the seamy story in the mid-70's, Giancana and Roselli were murdered before they could testify.

Today, Sinatra is again trying to use his friendship with high officials to buy the respectability that will get him a license to operate in the hotel-casino world. He has given Ronald Reagan's name as a reference in his latest Nevada application, and could point to the next Attorney General's presence at his party as evidence that he is respected by the law.

At confirmation hearings for William French Smith the Senate Judiciary Committee is duty-bound to request

## ESSAY

## Put Your Dreams Away

By William Safire

that F.B.I. Director William Webster provide the committee and the nominee with a current analysis of the Sinatra file. Then to a few questions:

Was Mr. Smith aware of the gangland associations detailed in the file? Was he aware of press reports of the criminal investigation in the looting of a Westchester, N.Y., theater operation, where Sinatra performed? Does he think it proper for the nation's chief law officer to attend a function honoring that man?

When the Nevada Gaming Control Board checks Mr. Sinatra's reference by writing to President Reagan, how will Attorney General Smith suggest that the President respond? With a cheery endorsement — or with an F.B.I. summary? Has any Sinatra intermediary asked any Reagan associate for help with Nevada politicians? Who suggested that Sinatra delay his Nevada submission until after the inaugural?

"Old Blue Eyes" is not applying for a Sears Roebuck credit card, as a Reagan spokesman disingenuously suggested — such a reference offers a claim to legitimacy, a clean bill of health to begin to affiliate at long last with one of those enterprises that generate huge sums of hard-to-trace cash. (It's not easy gettin' green.)

Let birthday-party-goer Smith review the F.B.I.'s Sinatra file. Then let him tell the Senate to what extent he thinks it proper for a friend of mobsters to profit from being a chum of the Chief Executive and of the man who runs the Department of Justice.